Book: Madeline

Author: Ludwig Bemelmans

Genre: Picture Book

Grade Level: K-2

Summary: Madeline is a young misfit, red headed orphan who lives with eleven other girls, all taken care of by a nun named Miss. Clavel. One night she wakes up to a searing pain in her stomach. She is rushed to the hospital where learns her appendix has burst and must be operated on immediately. All the girls come to visit her and see that she has received many gifts and candy to help with a speedy recovery. Later that night when the girls had gone to bed, Miss. Clavel wakes up to cries coming from their room. She rushes in to find them all awake and crying because they want their appendixes out too.

Reflection: This is one of the many different Madeline stories that will keep any child intrigues. It was one of my favorites growing up because the main character was so relatable. The antics Madeline performs are funny and entertaining as well as the rest of the little girls she lives with.

Book: The Bad Beginning

Author: Lemony Snicket

Genre: Adventure

Grade Level: 6-8

Summary: The story begins with three siblings Violet, Klaus, and Sunny who find out they have just lost their parents to a mysterious fire. They are sent to live with Count Olaf who claims to be their uncle though they have never heard of him. After he is horrible to them put them through impossible chores and humiliation, the children find out he only adopted them so he could inherit their fortune Violet will receive when she turns eighteen. They fight back with the law claiming he has no legal rights to their money. In return he plans a play where he and Violet will be married in using real marriage documents and a judge. The children end up fooling him and getting away.

Reflection: This is a great suspenseful story leaving you feeling heartbroken for the poor siblings. Count Olaf is a great character to hate after he repeatedly does the children wrong. Your rooting for the children throughout the whole book till justice is finally served. By the end, you can’t wait to read the next book.

Book: The Hunger Games

Author: Suzanne Collins

Genre: Adventure

Grade Level: 6-8

Summary: Katniss Everdeen is a member of District 12, the last of all the districts of Panem. Its reaping day and two children are chosen from each district to compete in The Hunger Games where there can only be one survivor. When her sister in chosen she volunteers in her place. From District 12, she and the other tribute Peeta travel toward the capitol for opening ceremonies and brief training. Once in the games she uses her wit and great hunting skills to save herself and Peeta, gaining them the spot in the winner’s circle.

Reflection: Although this is a fairly easy read, it is still a good one. The heroine Katniss is a sarcastic and down to earth girl who loathes The Hunger Games along with the majority of the other districts. You fall in love with her the moment she saves her sister from the reaping and by the end of the story; you want to know what will become of Katniss and Peeta after defying the capitol.

Book: Coraline

Author: Neil Gaiman

Genre: Adventure

Grade Level: 6-8

Summary: Coraline Jones has just moved into a new home with her mom and dad. Upon exploring she finds a door in the parlor that opens up to a brick wall. When she later returns to it, there is now and dark hallway, which she follows. The hallway spits her out back into her home, or so she thinks. After exploring a little she finds her “other mother” and “other father”. They want nothing but to please and play with Coraline all day. She stays a while but later returns home to find her real mom and dad have gone missing. She then must go back to the parallel home where her other mother is keeping her parents captive so that she will stay with her forever.

Reflection: This is a different and eerie story compared to most. I read it as a kid and it gave me the creeps. You feel for the character because all she wants to do is have some fun, but not at the cost of losing her family. It’s an exciting and scary alternative to other books that kids will love.

Book: More Scary Stories to Read in the Dark

Author: Alvin Schwartz

Genre: Horror

Grade Level: 6-8

Summary: This collection of short stories has everything from each end of the spectrum to scare any kid. It has old fashioned ghost stories to new disturbing stories you’ve never read anything like before. Each story contains its own gruesome picture that makes it an even scarier read.

Reflection: These stories always scared me when I was a kid. I could never read them alone mostly because the pictures were too much for me. They are great stories to share with your friends, some more mild than others.

Book: Little House in the Big Woods

Author: Laura Ingalls Wilder

Genre: Historical Fiction

Grade Level: 3-7

Summary: Laura is a young girl growing up in the woods with her Pa, Ma, and sister Mary. Every day she and her sister perform all of their chores before they can ever play. Every day is a new adventure for Laura as she does her part to help her family. They cook and clean every day and watch out for each other as they grow. The family shows throughout the book how strong their love and care for each other is, and how hard they must work to support their family.

Reflection: This is a great book for kids to read to get a good glimpse at what it might be like without technology and the fast pace we live in today. It introduces new concepts like what they used to do for fun and entertainment. It used to surprise me when I was little just how hard it was for them to put sugar on the table or to get water in the bath tub.

Book: Meet Felicity

Author: Valerie Tripp

Genre: Historical Fiction

Grade Level: 3-5

Summary: Felicity is a young girl living in colonial times. She has a deep love for horses and when she finds out the local tanner, Nye, is abusing his horse, she must see for herself. After seeing the mistreated horse she immediately falls in love and feels it is her duty to help it, but Nye forbids her to ever come back. Every night after, Felicity sneaks out of her home, puts on a pair of britches, and goes to the horse and tries to tame her. She names her Penny and over time earns her trust. After fully taming the horse she takes it from Nye, and rides it home surprising her family. Nye runs after taking the horse back but that doesn’t stop Felicity. She returns to Penny later that night and frees her into the wild.

Reflection: This was a favorite book of mine growing up. Any animal loving kid will fall in love with Felicity as she fights for Penny’s justice. It also gives a glimpse on how things were back then. I was always baffled that girls couldn’t wear pants, and it gave me more appreciation for what I have.